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Miracles and Superheroes

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Miracles and Superheroes

Abstract

"We need miracles in this world, I'm convinced. That is, we need the shining forth of God's power in this contested space that is the world."

Posting about believing without seeing from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/miracles-and-superheroes/>

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In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

Miracles and Superheroes

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Howard Schaap

“As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, ‘Have mercy on us, Son of David!’ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then he touched their eyes and said, ‘According to your faith let it be done to you.’ And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, ‘See that no one knows of this.’ But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district.” –Matthew 9:27-31

If you're like me, you're a total sucker for miracles. I love miracles so much that I'm tempted to be a reverse Thomas Jefferson—rather than cut out all the miracles in the Bible, as TJ did, I would cut out all the teaching and just go with the stories of walking on water, miraculous catches of fish, raising the dead.

It just seems to me that without the pouring forth of God's power in the world, there's not much point. It's like J.R.R. Tolkien said when he was accused of writing fantasy as an escape from the world: Why wouldn't someone who finds herself in jail want to escape?

Inherent in this answer is a refusal to just accept the world as it is. Something greater is breaking its way into our world, which begs the question, “How do we aid that thing in breaking in?”

I love this story in Matthew 9 of the two blind men because they, too, seem unwilling to just accept things as they are.

First, these blind men follow Jesus and call him a familiar Jewish name for the Messiah: “Have mercy on us, Son of David!” This is a public naming of Jesus' identity, and it seems to get his attention. It's also a statement of faith by these blind men, a calling out of who Jesus is and what he is to do in the world: bequeath mercy to those with faith. It's a good strategy on their part.

Jesus seems to be at a point in his ministry where he's drawing both positive and negative attention. So after this very public calling out, he takes the men “indoors” and tests their faith privately by asking, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?”

Faith has been important to the miracles in this chapter of Matthew. When Jesus sees the faith of the paralytic's friends (vs. 2), he forgives the man's sins; when the woman in the crowd touches his cloak, he tells her “your faith has healed you” (vs. 22). Only the mourners laugh at his assertion that the dead girl is sleeping (vs. 24), which perhaps prompts Jesus' direct questioning of the men's faith in this story.

In response, the men affirm his authority and their belief by two simple words, “Yes, Lord.”

Then Jesus says something dangerous: “According to your faith will it be done to you.”

Gulp.

I think I grew up—like many in the church—with a faith complex. “If only I had more faith, my life would go better,” I thought, or “If only I had more faith, God would take this or that problem away.” When I read, “According to your faith it will be done to you,” it seems to be a line about my deficiency.

Again if you're like me, there are a couple of problems with thinking this way. One of those problems is that it's a type of navel gazing. It takes the focus off Jesus' identity and the kingdom that's breaking in and puts it on us.

Then, too, at least for me, it gives a hint of my own desire for power and control. By, “If only I had more faith,

everything would be perfect,” I really mean to say that then I would be perfect, a sort of superhero, untouched by every sickness and able to walk on water and raise the dead. It has more to do with Captain America than it has to do with Jesus Christ. It confuses being Jesus with believing in him.

However, Christ’s miracles are multifaceted, and it’s his teaching that helps us to understand that. Christ’s miracles point us to his identity, they are signs of the kingdom that is arriving through him, and they set people free not just physically but spiritually. In this section of Matthew, Jesus’ miracles are largely about the blossoming of faith, of people taking the leap to believe these things *could* happen—the blind seeing, the mute talking, the lame walking—whether or not they actually do.

We need miracles in this world, I’m convinced. That is, we need the shining forth of God’s power in this contested space that is the world. Whether or not those miracles physically happen in my life, however, is beside the point. That they *did* happen, *do* happen, *can* happen, and *will* happen because Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of the Living God, and that this truth leads to the blossoming of faith, hope, and love in all our lives—that’s the important thing to believe.

Believing without seeing, that is the definition of faith. As Jesus himself said, speaking off the page and into our own time, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

And if we have this sort of faith, then we, too, have been witness to miraculous power, and like these blind men we must “go out and spread the news about him all over” (vs. 31).

How can you testify to Christ’s identity, to his power and mercy breaking into the world today?